

**Transcript of the  
“Conversation with the Justice”  
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Participants: Associate Justice Sandra Day O’Connor of the United States Supreme Court; Circuit Judge Johnnie B. Rawlinson of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit; Alan Schulman, Esq., co-chair of the Conference Executive Committee; Harvey Saferstein, Esq., chair of the Ninth Circuit Lawyer Representatives Coordinating Committee.

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**Alan Schulman:** Thank you Judge Levi. Justice O’Connor your announcement took us all by surprise. Was it a difficult decision for you?

**Justice O’Connor:** Yes, yes, it’s been such a privilege to serve on the Supreme Court. When I was little, I always wanted to work. I wanted to work at some kind of work worth doing. Something where the individual effort put in would make a difference. And I was so privileged to serve 24 years at work that fitted that category very well, and then some. So, I was lucky to have it.

**Alan Schulman:** Judge Marilyn Huff, who was the former chief of my district, the Southern District of California, named her six iron “Sandra,” after you because she thinks you got a hole in one with you six iron! What will retirement mean for you? Is there going to be some time for golf? Can you share with us, what if anything about your plans?

**Justice O’Connor:** Well, I hope so, I hope a little golf. I really love golf. I didn’t get to play in the tournament this year, because, you know, luggage was limited and I’m headed for a longer fishing expedition. And I couldn’t bring golf clubs, plus fishing gear, so one

of them had to go. And I actually just had one hole in one, I'm ready for another, but it hasn't happened. And it wasn't with a six iron, it was with my three wood, I hate to tell you.

**Alan Schulman:** Let's turn to some substantive matters. Let's start with the relationship between the branches. Uh, our panel...

**Justice O'Connor:** He's picking the worst first!

**Alan Schulman:** Our panel on Tuesday, I guess it was, on the relations between the branches, said that the relationship between the federal judiciary and Congress has deteriorated to a low point. We understand that during the past term, you've invited some House Republicans for private lunches at the court to open the lines of communication. What insights can you share with us about the current state of the relations between the judicial and legislative branches?

**Justice O'Connor:** Well, I'm pretty old you know and in all the years of my life, I don't think I've ever seen relations as strained as they are now, between the judiciary and some members of Congress. And it makes me very sad to see it. One of the strengths of this country has been its federal judiciary, and traditionally, in my early days as a lawyer we looked at federal judges as being the very finest legal minds in the country. And we expected that they would be drawn from the best in the legal profession, they made sacrifices to serve because they were successful in the practice of law and then would accept if offered a position on the bench. And the present climate is such that I worry about the future of the federal judiciary. For one thing, Congress has not seen fit to have judicial salaries keep pace with what would be expected of people in equivalent positions. I don't know about you, but I know when my law clerks go out and get a job, they earn far more the first year than any federal judge earns.

**Alan Schulman:** Me, too.

**Justice O'Connor:** And the pay of professors in the law schools exceeds that of federal judges. I mean, if you just look across the landscape, you see that it's been a struggle and federal judges like other people often have children to support and try to educate. Now it's always going to be somewhat of a sacrifice to serve, but it's gotten worse. And with the present climate of antipathy in the Congress, I don't see any prospect for adjustment of those salaries, and that's a disappointment. And, in fact, there are efforts being made currently to limit federal court jurisdiction to decide certain issues on an issue by issue basis in areas that some members of Congress think that the federal courts should not be involved, and that's a new approach that's worrisome. And one of the things that our country has tried to do is, with the break up of the Soviet Union, is to promote the concept of the rule of law around the globe, in hopes that that will enable us to keep the peace better in the future than we have in the past. We're even working in areas in the Middle East hoping that all these efforts to promote the rule of law will in the long run make this whole world a safer better place. And a key concept of the rule of law is a notion of an independent judiciary, that's what our country as a policy has been supporting and trying to do. And I've worked, as some of you know, for a long time with something that originally was started by the American Bar Association called the Central Eastern European Law Initiative, now it's Central Eurasian and Eastern European, we've expanded and know we're also as I say trying to help in the Middle East and other areas. And basic to that concept is an independent judiciary, well trained responsible people who are able to be that independent entity of government that brings balance to what otherwise would get out of kilter by majority decision making. In our own country, we had a Bill of Rights that was added in order to make sure that our country adopted the Constitution, it wasn't going to happen without a Bill of Rights. And the Bill of Rights concept was there are certain rights that extend to individual citizens that can not be taken away by laws passed by the majority in the legislative branch if they violate one of those individual rights. And the concept was that we have federal courts, and courts in the states as well, who could enforce those guarantees of individual rights. Now, that concept is one that we have tried to promote across the globe, and it's been fairly successful. Look what happened recently in the Ukraine. There was an election and the election was between the existing, I don't know how to characterize them, the existing

prime minister or president if you will who represented the old guard, and the new candidate who offered to be the candidate that could better serve the people of Ukraine in this free market world in which we live, Yevtoshenko. And the election was held, and the old guard incumbent was declared the winner and many people who had participated in the election thought that it was fraudulently conducted and they recounted many examples of stuffed ballot boxes and so forth and there were massive protests. The protestors succeeded in bringing action in the courts of the Ukraine. Now this CEELI group that I've worked with went to great trouble in Ukraine to promote an independent judiciary and we had programs attended by every one of the justices on the Ukrainian Supreme Court. Now this issue of fraud went to the Ukrainian Supreme Court. They did a brilliant thing, they allowed evidence to come in and it was televised, so the whole nation saw the nature of the proof and the evidence. And at the end of the day, the Ukrainian Supreme Court, in an act of incredible independence and wisdom, found there was indeed election fraud and the rightful winner was declared, and all of this took place without blood shed. I thought that was a transforming moment in the success of our efforts to promote the rule of law and an independent judiciary. And yet in our country today, we're seeing efforts to prevent that, a desire not to have an independent judiciary, that worries me. (Applause)

**Alan Schulman:** I'm going to turn to my colleague Harvey.

**Harvey Saferstein:** Thank you. Let's switch to another area of relations, this time the relations between state and federal government, something we call federalism. In Arizona you served in all three branches of government before you went on to the Supreme Court. I assume your experience in the Arizona legislature and attorney general's office helped form summary reviews on when and if to defer to state and local governments. Could you talk a little bit about that and what do you think it's going to be like when we have a court without you, and without somebody who's been in state legislatures and state attorney generals' office?

Justice O'Connor: Well, I think people can be great justices without the experiences I've had. But on the other hand, it doesn't hurt! So it will probably be all right, but I did serve, as you pointed out, in all three branches of state government, and I felt we had pretty good state government in the state of Arizona. I know that hasn't always been true in all states in all parts of our country. But we're talking about the here and now, and I think we have some pretty good state governments around the country. And the intent of the framers of our Constitution as you know was to leave in place the separate state governments and enable them to carry out the bulk of the decision making, and the rule making for the citizens in this country.

**Harvey Saferstein:** The "laboratories."

**Justice O'Connor:** Yes, the different state laboratories. Let them try things and see how it works. In California, they wanted, the voters wanted to try a program of prescriptions for medical use of marijuana. Now as a state legislator, I don't think I would have gone for that, but, the people of California did overwhelmingly, it even went to a public vote. And the case came to our court this year and our court found, as you know, that the federal law preempted it, the state's efforts. I didn't think that was a necessary result and wrote in dissent. But it was one example of the kind of issue that continues to arise in the area of federal state relations and regulations. And it is an important area; it's never going to go away. But what we've seen in the passage of time is a much larger role for our national legislative branch, the Congress. And as time has gone on the Congress has wanted to extend its law making into areas that, at least traditionally, had been left to the states. And since I have been on this court, I think the court had enough votes to try some line drawing, it all turns around the interpretation of the Commerce Clause power of Congress. Is it totally unlimited or is there some areas still left for the states? And the court had a few cases in which it held that Congress had crossed that line, but in cases decided this term, it appeared to go back the other way. So this seems to be an area of continued uncertainty and perhaps drifting back in the other direction. So who's to say? I don't know.

**Harvey Saferstein:** Thank you. I'm going to turn the program over to my colleague, Judge Rawlinson.

**Judge Rawlinson:** Thank you Harvey. Justice O'Connor, I'd now like to turn to the discussion of one of the landmark cases decided by the court this term, *Booker*, I know that's one of your favorite topics of discussion. Many of the lawyers and judges in this room are presently engaged in the practical application of the *Booker* decision. Could you share with us your observations on the aftermath of *Booker*?

**Justice O'Connor:** Well, I've written a little bit about that, in defense. And I thought that the court's decision to require submitting to jury the various aspects of sentencing determinations when in fact determinations need be made was one that was an enormous step for the court to take after more than two hundred years of not finding that requirement, and that it was going to necessitate a huge amount of work for the federal courts and the state courts to redo sentences and get them handed down, and that it would not sit comfortably with the sentencing guideline regime that Congress had passed on a different understanding. And all of those predictions I think have come true because those of you in the federal courts as judges have seen the necessity to go back and review countless sentences, and to try and implement this new concept. The court had to decide what to do with the sentencing guidelines, which as I say, sat very uncomfortably in conflict in part with that concept and so it held that the guidelines, the federal guidelines passed by Congress would be not binding but in effect discretionary. And Congress is now taking a look at what it wants to do with that. I don't know what the outcome will be, but we know at least that there are many provisions being drafted to impose mandatory minimum sentencing. And I think that has been a concern to a lot of federal judges to have mandatory sentencing. So, I don't, again it's hard to say probably congress will resort to a great many more mandatory minimum sentences.

**Judge Rawlinson:** Thank you, Justice O'Connor. You had earlier discussed your involvement with CECLI, the central eastern European law initiative. How has that

involvement influenced your view regarding the incorporation of international law norms into this country's jurisprudence?

**Justice O'Connor:** I don't think that has much to do with the issue of whether a court will ever in the course of writing appellate court opinions occasionally cite opinions from a court of another country. Now I don't believe that our court or any member of our court has ever cited an opinion of another country, as binding authority on us in interpreting our own constitution. I don't believe that's happened. But I think that is the fear expressed by some in Congress, who've taken great offense to the notion of ever discussing any kind of foreign judgment. But, of course, we're pretty much forced to do it in many contexts. Our nation has entered into hundreds of treaties with other countries, trying to impose by treaty obligations certain ground rules in certain areas, for instance, in the liability of air carriers for damage to life or property and just hundreds of other examples, NAFTA, CAFTA, the whole ball of wax. And when you do that, then it is going to become necessary to look at the opinions of other member nation's courts in interpreting those treaties, when we have to interpret them. And so it's not going to be possible to ignore judgments from other countries in some areas. What about the enforcement of foreign judgments here? Or the enforcement of our judgments overseas? What about regimes looking for evidence in advance of trials, discovery? If we want to impose it on foreigners, or vice a versa? I mean you can't avoid, I think, looking into these things. But I suppose that a touchy citation was in the juvenile death penalty case, and that seemed to set off quite a firestorm. I think in writing appellate court opinions, we generally feel free to look at the opinions of law review writers, textbook writers, other people who commented on a particular problem in the course of applying our own rationale, and, in that case, several members of our court thought that it was at least note worthy that no other nation, but two, the United States and what was it, Sudan, still imposed a death penalty for juveniles under the age of eighteen, and so commented. But those citations were found very offensive, by some members of Congress. I don't personally think that it's a good idea to restrict freedom of speech or thought for any of our citizens even if they're federal judges. (Applause) Now the great champion of that, of course, was Oliver Wendell Holmes. What was his wonderful quote? I should have

looked it up and brought it here today. But he was the great defender of the notion that the First Amendment guarantees the free flow of thinking and ideas, and I suppose it does.

**Judge Rawlinson:** Thank you now, Justice O'Connor.

**Alan Schulman:** Speaking of the First Amendment, let's turn to another highly charged issue: the Establishment Clause. This term, the court decided the two Ten Commandments cases. Both decisions were 5-4 and came out different ways. Can you give us any comments on how we as a society can accommodate expressions of public faith?

**Justice O'Connor:** Well, this has been a very difficult area for the courts because there has never been any totally clear doctrinal framework for deciding these issues that has satisfied the nation as a whole. It prompted me to write separately in the McCreary County case this term just ended. And I think I'll read just a very brief portion of what I wrote.

"The First Amendment expresses our nation's fundamental commitment to religious liberty by means of two provisions, one protecting the free exercise of religion, the other barring establishment of religion. They were written by the descendants of people who had come to this land precisely so that they could practice their religion freely. Together with that other First Amendment guarantee of free speech, a free press, and the rights to assemble and petition, the religion clauses were designed to safeguard the freedom of conscience and belief that those immigrants had sought. They embody an idea that was once considered radical. Free people are entitled to free and diverse thoughts, which government ought not to constrain or direct."

And I think the goal of the religion clauses is clear to carry out the founders' plan of preserving religious liberty to the fullest extent possible in a pluralistic society. And at a time when we see all around the world the violent consequences of the assumption of



religious authority by government, Americans can count themselves fortunate. Our regard for constitutional boundaries has protected us from similar travails while allowing private religious exercise to flourish. Americans attend churches and their places of worship more often than do the citizens of any other developed nation. And our citizens express to a greater degree than citizens of any other developed nation that religion plays an especially important role in our lives.

And you have to ask whether we're better off following James Madison, the founder, the father of our constitution, who said the religion of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man. And to that end we've held that the guarantees of religious freedom protect citizens from religious incursions by the states, as well as the federal government to try to allow some separation. And it's hard to see why we should give that up in the face of the success that we've had. So that was the notion I expressed. And, maybe the formulation, the guidelines, aren't as clear as we'd love to see. But the concept has worked pretty well for quite a while, separation.

**Harvey Saferstein:** Let's turn to another, say, hot decision this term. The New London eminent domain 5-4 decision in which you vigorously dissented and warned, and I quote, that "the government now has a license to transfer property from those with fewer resources to those with more," end quote. And that the majority's decision that you were dissenting from, quote "effectively deletes the words 'for public use' from the takings clause of the Fifth Amendment" end quote. Now this case has obviously caught the public's attention. Was this a difficult dissent for you to write?

**Justice O'Connor:** No, it wasn't. (Laughter and applause) This is an area where I think we're going to see a number of states in the United States enact some protective legislation if they don't already have it. Now, my home state of Arizona already has a provision in the state constitution that goes a long way toward solving the problem in that state. So I would expect to see a little more state action in that area.

**Alan Schulman:** Let me turn to maybe some questions about the court as an institution and some of your personal views on that. It's been 11 years since the last departure from the court when Justice Blackmun stepped down. How is the court different from when you joined it, and are the tones of dissent different?

**Justice O'Connor:** Well, the court changed a lot in the years that I was there. When I joined it, our chief justice was Warren Burger. We still had sitting on the court Justice William Brennan, Justice Thurgood Marshall, Justice Byron White, Justice Lewis Powell. Justice White once said that when you get a new member of the court, you don't just have a new member, you get a new court. And that's because it's only a membership of nine, and the nine work very closely together. Anytime you're with a small group over a period of time you just form working relationships of one kind or another that are in place. And you change one member and it does change the working relationships of the whole. So I've seen that happen a number of times I sat in many different seats in that court, in that courtroom, and now the court's going to see it again.

It was remarkable that we stayed the same for 11 years. That time was only exceeded by one time in the early first century of the court when Justice Story was a member of the court. So that was a long time to be together. We got used to each other. And sometimes the dissents get pretty vigorous. And I don't always like to see that, but on the other hand, I occasionally resort to a little vigor of my own. (Laughter)

**Harvey Saferstein:** Well, that brings us about to another topic that we're all thinking about now, which is the confirmation process that's coming up. You were confirmed in the Senate some time ago by a 99-0 vote. That's pretty good.

**Justice O'Connor:** In light of more recent history, I'd say it is.

**Harvey Saferstein:** Well, you're going where I'm going, too, which is what do you think about the modern confirmation process? It's gotten to be quite different ...

**Justice O'Connor:** It has.

**Harvey Saferstein:** ... any thoughts about the process and about the subjects that come up for discussion?

**Justice O'Connor:** I've said on other occasions and probably here in this very circuit conversation that for most of the court's history the judiciary committee never thought it was appropriate to summon judicial nominees to the committee for questioning. And it wasn't until the nomination of Justice Brandeis that they even thought of doing that. And there was a lot of unhappiness there because Justice Brandeis was a very intelligent lawyer and he had worked as a pro bono lawyer attacking some big-business interest in some litigation. And when he was nominated, there was some opposition. And it resulted in the submission to him of some written questions.

Well of course it escalated with the arrival in our midst of television coverage of those hearings. Now that's a very attractive thing for members of the judiciary committee because it's free for them. You don't have to pay for it. And there they are looking erudite, asking tough questions of the judicial nominees, and so, it's pretty irresistible. And when you overlay that with the present concerns of some members of Congress with judges who are being painted as "activists," whatever that is, I think that it's inevitable that there's going to be a lot of time spent on confirmation hearings of members of our court. So beyond that, I don't think I'll comment.

**Alan Schulman:** Thank you. Let me turn to a slightly different, possibly related, subject. It seems that every moral and ethical issue has now been transformed at some point into a legal dispute. The court has become a battle ground for some of the nation's most polarizing issues. Should the court use its certiorari power to remove itself from some of these issues? Is this something that the court discusses as a group, or is it an individual judgment made by each justice?

**Justice O'Connor:** The decision of whether to grant review of a case, whether to accept a petition for certiorari, is one in which every justice participates. And this is one of the remarkable features of our court. It isn't assigned to a committee of the court, of justices. It isn't assigned to a staff committee. All nine of us are responsible for reading all of the petitions for certiorari that are filed and the responses if there are any. And coming to an individual decision do I think this is the petition we should grant or not grant.

Now, obviously, you can have some very serious issue that you know eventually the court will probably have to address to the extent that conflicts develop in the lower courts on the issue. But we certainly don't have to take the issue the first time it's presented to us. And it's not at all unusual for the court to fail to have four votes to take a case. If it's an important case, but it's only the first opportunity to look at it, we tend to be cautious routinely and wait until there really is a split of authority in the lower courts. If all of the lower courts and all of you go the same direction on an issue, there's no need for us to step in at all. So it's a judgment call. If there's a serious split out there, there'll probably be four votes to take it.

**Alan Schulman:** Judge Rawlinson.

**Judge Rawlinson:** Justice O'Connor, on a personal note, as Judge Levi mentioned, you are a role model for many people in this country. Could you share for us some of the challenges you have encountered in your professional life, and how you have overcome those challenges?

**Justice O'Connor:** Oh, I don't like to think of them as challenges, as much as opportunities. I had a very hard time getting a job as a lawyer when I started out. And I'm so thrilled that in my lifetime there has been a sea change in that when I went to law school only 3 percent of the law students nationwide were female. Today, it's over 50 percent. And, the result of having so few women law students was that prospective employers, the firms, the law firms out there, didn't think they had to pay much attention

to them if they put in a job application. And indeed, I couldn't even get an interview. So, that was a challenge.

John and I had decided to get married. He was one year behind me in law school, and so he had some time to go before he had graduated and could go to work. And we both liked to eat, and so one of us was going to have to go to work, and that was me. And I really wanted to work as a lawyer. And I just couldn't get any interest in a California law firm. He was still at Stanford, so I was looking in the Bay Area primarily. The district attorney in San Mateo County had once had a woman lawyer on his staff, and I thought, well, he could have another maybe. So I went to see him. And we had a very nice conversation. He was elected to the office, and you know, elected officials learn how to be gracious to the public. So he was nice to me. And he looked at my resume and he said, "Oh, Miss Day, that looks very good. You're somebody I'd enjoy having here." But he said, "I don't have a vacancy. And I don't even have a space where I could put you."

He took me on a tour of the Redwood County, the San Mateo County courthouse, which was a wonderful old building, but it was small, and there just wasn't any room. I could see that. And so I said, well, I'll stay in touch and see if something can work out. And I went back to the Lazy-B ranch. John and I were getting ready for the wedding. And I wrote him a very long letter, and told him all the reasons why I thought I could help him in his office, and why I hoped he'd hire me. And I said I know you don't have any money, but you know, if you'll have me, I could just start without pay and maybe something will come along. Maybe you can get funding. And then I said, and I know you don't have any space, but I met your secretary. She's very nice, and she has kind of a big office, maybe she'd let me sit in there with her. So that's the deal we struck. No pay and I was in his secretary's office.

**Judge Rawlinson:** What a deal!

**Justice O'Connor:** But I had a job. And I hadn't been there long, and I was really enjoying it. It was fun. And the district attorney was appointed the county judge, which

was terrific because then he moved to the judge's chambers in the courthouse. And that freed up a position, and my supervisor became the district attorney. That freed up a slot, and everybody was happy. So it worked, but I had to be a little creative in the years that I started to get work. But I ended up in the public sector, and that was a little more open to women than the private. So in a nutshell that's how it worked.

And then President Ronald Reagan decided to take a huge step for women in 1981. Now, don't give the credit to me. I didn't make that decision. Ronald Reagan made that decision. And when he decided to put a woman on the U.S. Supreme Court after 191 years without one, that opened doors for women all across this nation and indeed around the world. And that was just an incredible thing that he did.

I don't know that enough notice was taken of that when he passed away not so long ago. Much talk was made of all the things he accomplished, but that was, in my view, a terribly important thing. (Applause)

**Harvey Saferstein:** I know Justice O'Connor, based upon what you've said, people are going to be interested in your papers. There have been some recent releases -- Justice Blackmun's papers --- and some questions raised about that. And I've wondered on your views about that.

**Justice O'Connor:** Well, I don't think that papers of Supreme Court justices ought to be released so soon. I know that was Justice Blackmun's decision. I've not made a similar decision. I, like he, have left, made arrangements, to have my papers with the Library of Congress, but they will not be opened while people with whom I served are still sitting on the court because I think that's a very uncomfortable thing. And I think that people engaged in serious research over the long term about the court are going to do a better job with greater distance from the time, from the events. And so there won't be -- what's the name of Linda Greenhouse's book on Justice Blackmun?

**Alan Schulman:** "Becoming Justice Blackmun"

**Justice O'Connor:** "Becoming Justice Blackmun." Well, I don't think you'll see a "Becoming Justice O'Connor" anytime soon based on my papers.

**Alan Schulman:** Thank you. Justice O'Connor, in the few minutes that we have left, I'd like to ask you sort of a big wind-up question if I may. Looking back on your career on the court, what are you most proud of? What are you most disappointed in? What is the most important decision you authored, and how do you think the history of the court will be written for this period?

**Justice O'Connor:** Oh, I don't know. You know, you can't get a good handle on it when you're too close to it. And I'm too close to it. But, in terms of what I'm proud of, I think it would be that President Reagan enabled doors to be open for women. And I never expected to be that person, and was pretty scared to take that on, because it's a very hard job. And I didn't want to mess it up badly, because it would make it harder for other women to follow. And I hope it won't be that in the future.

And of course, I don't know what opinions that I've written are going to have lasting significance. That, too, is something awfully hard for the author to predict. But in terms of the terrorist threats that we face today, I was privileged to write in the *Hamdi* case, in ways that may point a useful direction. I don't know, we'll wait and see.

In terms of practical, daily use, an opinion I wrote a good many years ago, the *Strickland* case, on standards of attorney performance in criminal cases, is one that is cited every day in every state all across the nation. So maybe that had practical significance.

And in the Establishment Clause area, again, I don't, it's hard to predict. But I've written a few opinions in that area. So who knows we'll wait and see. It's OK.

And, as judges, the big question of course on our court is how to apply the provisions of the Bill of Rights when they end up requiring us to draw lines that restrict in some way,

or limit the actions taken by the elected representatives of our country, the Congress. And that's very sensitive as we've seen recently. And that's not going to be anything that gets any easier, I suppose.

But it's been such a privilege to work on the court, to be there, to be one of the nine voices. And I've been so fortunate I think to have been on the court when every member of that court is highly intelligent and gifted, and every member really cares about it and wants to do the best possible job. I mean, that's remarkable.

I've been a legislator and I've seen this game of vote-trading. There has never been one hint of that in 24 years. Never. I mean that's fabulous to work in an environment like that. It speaks so well for the court. I think the court is a wonderful institution, and I hope that the American people will see it as that, and will see all the federal courts in that light, even though of course there are occasionally decisions that a particular citizen won't agree with. That's OK. That's all right, and it's OK to say so. You know, we're not beyond criticism, certainly. But as an institutional structure, we've been so blessed in this country. And I do hope that our citizens see that and continue to believe in it.

Now, I think our time is just about up. And I did bring one little anonymous poem with me, that I want to read to you and -- because I think it's pretty relevant -- if that's OK.

**Harvey Saferstein:** Fine with us.

**Justice O'Connor:** Alright.

Sometime when you're feeling important,

Sometime when your ego's in bloom,

Sometime when you take it for granted you're the best qualified in the room,



Sometime when you feel your going would leave an unfillable hole,

Just follow this simple instruction and see how it humbles your soul.

Take a bucket, fill it with water, put your hand in it, up to the wrist,

Pull it out and the hole that's remaining is a measure of how you'll be missed.

You may splash all you please when you enter,

You can stir up the water galore,

But stop, and you'll find in a minute, that it looks quite the same as before.

The moral in this quaint example is do just the best that you can,

Be proud of yourself but remember,

There is no indispensable woman!